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U.S. blasts KGB threat at Olympics

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U.S. ATTY. GEN. William French Smith took the Reagan administration's longstanding anti-Soviet attitude one step further Monday by flatly accusing Soviet KGB agents of sending death threats to Asian and black African athletes attending the Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

In an address to the opening assembly of the American Bar Association convention in the Hyatt Regency Chicago hotel, Smith blasted the Soviets and several of their Communist allies as "reprehensible." He said the letters were "openly racist and disgusting."

The State Department in Washington last month released copies of a leaflet sent to members of the Zimbabwe Olympic delegation threatening them with death. That leaflet and similar letters sent to Olympic athletes in China, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and South Korea, were mailed on letterheads linking them to the "Ku-Klux Klan."

But State Department officials at the time quickly suggested the letters may have been the work of someone else. They pointed out that the Ku Klux Klan in the United States does not use a hyphen between the first two words of its name. And they noted Klan letterheads generally contain the full name of the organization's particular unit rather than simply listing the general title "Ku Klux Klan" as the threatening letters had.

ALAN ROMBERG, a State Department spokesman, refused at a news conference last month to directly blame Moscow for the letters. But Romberg stressed the let-

ters fit neatly into the Soviet Union's position that it was keeping its athletes from attending the Olympics because their safety was threatened by extremists.

In his speech Monday, Smith didn't pull any punches. He became the first senior U.S. official to flatly accuse the Soviets of mailing the letters.

"We have copies of those letters," he said. "They are openly racist and disgusting and they threaten violence against Asian and African athletes who participate in the games."

"But even more reprehensible than the letters themselves is what we know about their actual origin. They were not produced or sent by the Ku Klux Klan. They were, instead, manufactured and mailed by another organization devoted to terror: the KGB."

Smith said he could not give complete details about the documents but said a thorough analysis, "including linguistic and forensic techniques, reveals that they are classic examples of the Soviet forgery or disinformation operation."

"THEY WERE apparently intended to aid the Soviets in justifying their boycott of the Olympics and to gain the support of non-Communist bloc countries."

Smith told reporters after his speech that his comments were based on far more than idle speculation and he had complete confidence the documents, indeed, were KGB forgeries.

"I would not have made the statement if I did not [have confidence]," Smith said.